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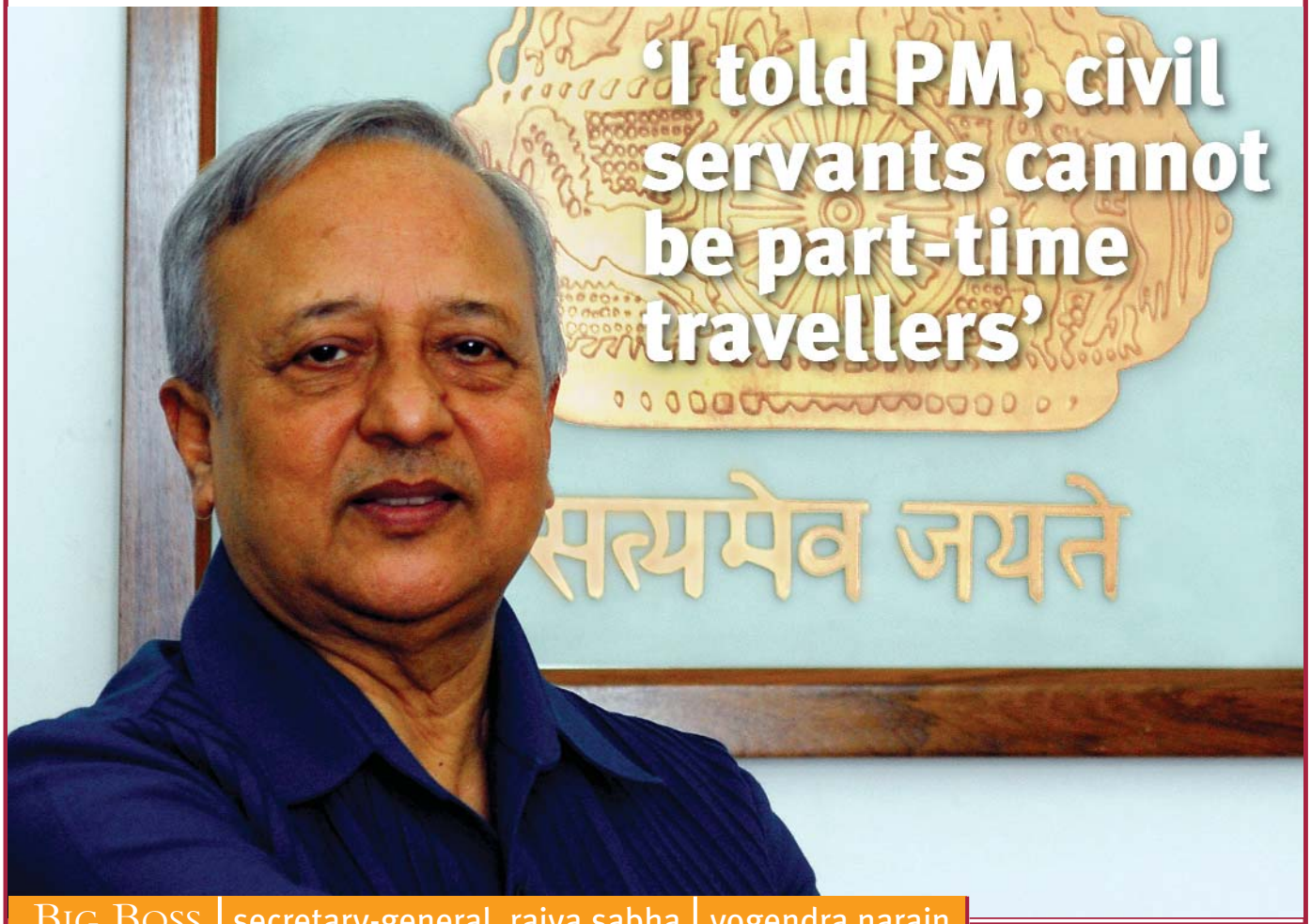
gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT



'I told PM, civil servants cannot be part-time travellers'

BIG BOSS | secretary-general, rajya sabha | yogendra narain

interviewed by ANIL TYAGI

DrYogendra Narain (IAS, 1965, UP cadre) was founder Chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Greater Noida. He was also Secretary in the Ministries of Defence and Surface Transport, Government of India. When he moved to the Centre after a stint as Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, the entire bureaucracy turned out for a memorable farewell – they put him on a chariot and drew it from the UP Secretariat building to its gate. The novel gesture was evidence of the respect he commanded among the civil servants. And, breaking convention, the Indian Army too accorded him a similar farewell on his retirement as Defence Secretary.

gfiles: *You have served the government for 37 years. How do you evaluate this period in terms of governance?*
Yogendra Narain: This has been a period of growth accompanied by accountability – middle- and higher-level bureaucracy being definitely more responsible. During the 1950s and '60s, the Indian Civil Service was known for being more of a steel frame, non-responsive and authoritarian. However, as time went by, realizing the power of democracy, civil servants became more accessible. Their perception and mindset transformed qualitatively, enabling them to communicate comfortably with the masses.

gfiles: *India has 603 districts. It is said the growth engine of democracy passes through District Magistrates. How can the gateway of DMs bring about growth and prosperity?*
YN: First, the British initially set up our administration. District Magistrates do not require any political help. District administration is a continuous process marked by hierarchical structure. It is a paradox that the District Magistrates move out from districts and manage the state and country when 65 per cent

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Big Boss

of the population lives in rural areas. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asked me what could be done to improve the administration. I suggested a separate Indian Administrative Rural Service. We cannot be part-time travellers. District administration should be set up as per the permanent structure for rural administration, where we can have region-wise grouping of officers within the state. A responsive administration system has to be evolved.

India is globalizing. The officers need expertise on WTO, currency, financing, banks. IAS officers should have specialized training in these areas and become specialists. This will enable them to discuss governance with visiting bureaucrats from advanced countries in a global perspective. A level playing field has to be provided.

gfiles: *But why are only IAS officers chosen to man technical ministries?*

YN: The Ministry's role is managerial.

gfiles: *Does the bureaucracy provide vision to elected politicians?*

YN: Civil servants play a vital role in the state and at the Centre. Politicians always believe in end results without appreciating the intricacies of planning and implementation of schemes. In the state, the bureaucracy is always the initiator. At the Centre, it plays a complementary role.

gfiles: *Does the bureaucracy really play a significant role in development?*

YN: Yes. I was Chief Secretary, UP. We see to it that schemes are implemented in letter and spirit. People often say UP is backward whereas data proves otherwise. UP is among the top milk, sugar, vegetable producers.

gfiles: *But is the civil servant meant for general or specialized administration?*

YN: When Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel advocated the need for the Indian Administrative Service, he meant generalized administration. So we copied the British system. Japan has specialized ministry-wise cadres for administration where officers join, perform, grow and retire without having to move out.

gfiles: *Is Indian bureaucracy keeping pace with the times?*

YN: I think we are. Topics on global issues have been included in the Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy syllabus. In the 1960s, it was just CrPC law and general administration.

gfiles: *But the bureaucracy is still not responsible…*

YN: Our system was based on mistrust in the early days. Files needed to move along a long trajectory. If something amiss happened, there was always a CVC on one's head. But it is always a joint success and joint failure. We have to see how we can perform better within the given system. But we cannot afford to lag behind in fine-tuning our system.

gfiles: *Do you think the IAS machinery is a suitable instrument in the hands of government for growth?*

YN: Of course. The instrument is chan-

Continued on page 4

PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

'The administrator-population ratio comes to around 1:60, which is the lowest in the whole region. Every day you are announcing new schemes, new programmes and the machinery is the same. You are opening the door for corruption'

gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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WE lead this issue with a remarkable interview of Yogendra Narain, Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha. The piece is noteworthy not only for what he says but also for how he says it. This 1965-batch IAS officer (UP cadre) is most unlike the stereotype image of the cautious, taciturn bureaucrat. Actually, if you know anything about the Indian bureaucracy, it is chock-full of officers like Narain - expressive, forceful, reform-minded and with something to say.

Just as progressive elements within India campaigned for decades against the licence-permit raj until it finally came apart, so too have reformist officers within the bureaucracy been leading the charge against babuism, stagnation and the hidebound attitudes of the Abominable No Men inherited from the British Raj.

Narain makes a powerful case that civil servants can and should be in the vanguard of changing and transforming this nation. He argues for political reforms that will create new specializations, greater transparency, and a new rural civil service whose officers will not be treated as itinerants or "part-time travellers", as he so colourfully expostulates.

Proof of Narain's contention that the Indian bureaucracy has produced change agents lies elsewhere in the pages of this issue of gfiles. Two Magsaysay Award winners (the equivalent of the Asian Nobel), Aruna Roy and Kiran Bedi, talk about their experiences in transforming society peacefully. Roy, a 1968-batch IAS officer, was part of a movement that propelled an entire youth brigade of college graduates into the brave new world of what was called "alternative development work" to campaign against poverty, deprivation, illiteracy, injustice and disease. Bedi, often referred to as India's "supercop" (a label she does not like but which has nonetheless stuck), tells us how a mixture of compassion and toughness harnessed to an unfaltering spiritual vision brought change to Tihar jail, India's largest and most notorious prison.

The India Story is all about transformation. And who better to hear it from than Narain, Roy and Bedi?

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LETTERS I am impressed by the idea of bringing affairs of government and civil servants into focus. This aspect has not been shared and analysed even by those in governance. There is an incomplete understanding of the way the administration is run. The people have a right to be informed about it not only by critics but also the protagonists of the science of governance.
Prabhat Kumar, IAS (Retd), Former Governor & Cabinet Secretary

The media does not provide an inside view of governance as is being done by gfiles. A much-needed gap in information has been bridged. Conducting opinion polls is a valid scientific exercise, but the Indian media has been using it in a most unscientific manner and perhaps also for commercial purposes – both valid and illegal. But condemning this tool that gives a peep into the minds of voters would be like throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Instead, norms need to be established for authentic use of the method.
Prof. BK Kuthiala
Institute of Mass Communication & Media Technology, Kurukshetra University

I was expecting such a magazine to come out and now it has. It will be useful for those who need updating about the bureaucracy.
Bhim Sen Singh
Principal, Kirorimal College, Delhi

ging and is no more static. It's responding to local and global needs and pressures. The response might be low but it's there significantly. We are communicating with media better, more transparently. In the 1970s, bureaucrats were asked not to attend private parties and mix with businessmen. Happily, things have changed.

gfiles: *Did being founder Chairman of NHAI and Greater Noida help you deliver as an administrator?*

YN: Yes. New concept, new ideas, new management perceptions were successfully implemented without having to carry baggage of past organizations.

gfiles: *Is the bureaucracy's present strength adequate to administer the country?*

YN: The workload is too much. The bureaucracy is reeling under pressure. The Centre has already reduced its employees from 38 to 34 lakhs. The total bureaucracy comes to approximately one crore 50 lakh. The administrator-population ratio comes to around 1:60, which is the lowest in the whole Asian region. Every day you are announcing new schemes, new programmes and the machinery is the same. You are opening the door for corruption. We need more bureaucrats to make India's growth engine more productive.

gfiles: *Civil servants are now allowed to serve private business houses and then rejoin the service. If the private job is so attractive, shouldn't he resign from the government?*

YN: No. Times are changing. We have to bring in required changes in the system in a competitive world. You must understand the problem of the bureaucracy. We have to be well acquainted with the problems and culture, management techniques and technological upgradations of the business houses and private entrepreneurs. We learn after joining them. As Chief Secretary, UP, I allowed this mobility with the condition that rejoining the cadre was a must. This arrangement was made to ensure that the positive aspects of the private sector were ploughed back into the government. The Canadian bureaucracy has had this arrangement for long. As Chairman, NHAI, I visited the US and found their highways well maintained. Once I stopped at a highway gas station and asked a staffer the economics of highway management. He said, for every unit of gas 30 cents are charged from the customer. The idea struck me and, on my return, I proposed that 50 paise be charged per litre for improving highways. It was accepted and increased to one rupee per litre. As a result, we now have Rs 8,000 crore in the highways kitty. Bureaucrats are essentially change agents.

gfiles: *You worked with three CMs and one Governor under President's Rule in UP. Did this help you as an administrator?*

YN: Yes. Files moved fast with almost no bottlenecks. But, basically it is not an individual who works in the system, it is team work. Yet, power helps civil servants deliver and improve the system.

gfiles: *You worked with Sripati Mishra, Kalyan Singh, ND Tiwari as CMs and Motilal Vora as Governor. How do you evaluate them?*

YN: All were different and had strong points. Sripati Mishra was nice, simple and unassuming. Though he never interfered in the administration, he knew ground realities. ND Tiwari had brilliant ideas and plans. Instead of taking advice from bureaucrats, he guided them. Kalyan Singh was a very firm administrator and always meant business. He was concerned about law and order problems and ensured that developmental schemes were properly implemented.

gfiles: *Which bureaucracy do you like the most in the world?*

YN: I still love the British bureaucracy. The British understood India's problems well simply because they stayed here long. And we borrowed their administrative set-up. We understand each other better than any other countries. Unfortunately, the US bureaucracy is unable to understand us.

gfiles: *Given a chance, which bureaucratic set-up would you like to have in India?*

YN: A new orientation is required. When Kamal Pande was Cabinet Secretary, he initiated the grouping of ministries and wanted bureaucrats to move within those ministries. I would also like to go for clubbing of ministries. However, the posting within the group should be rotational and start from Joint Secretary level. g

'We (bureaucrats) have to be well acquainted with the problems and culture, management techniques and technological upgradations of the business houses and private entrepreneurs. We learn after joining them'

Dr Yogendra Narain is a poet and author of *Clouds and Other Poems*. His favourite poem is Rudyard Kipling's *If*, especially the last stanza:

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And–which is more–you'll be a Man, my son!

Riddle of Indian democracy

The US-based professor of public policy ponders Indian democratic institutions' success and failure

MUCH of what is happening in India today should have been apparent to any discerning analyst long ago. India was on its way to becoming a major power prior to the globalization fever. It is one of the few developing countries that have enjoyed sustained growth in per capita incomes since 1950. Much of the impetus for economic growth has come from domestic sources. It is important not to exaggerate the importance of global integration.

But the country's destiny cannot be realized so long as it is home to half the world's destitute and illiterate, and when a third of its population lives below the poverty line. Can India's democratic institutions that have served some of the people so well be reformed to empower the poor? Economic growth and redistributive justice is not a zero sum game in which India must choose either to pursue a rapid and urban-based double-digit growth or alternatively pursue a more equitable growth but be reconciled to accepting a slower economic growth. The success of India is owed to the miracle of its democracy and its democratic institutions and processes that has empowered the great majority of its citizens to realize their capabilities and entitlements. The failures too, ironically, stem from what may be described as democratic deficit.

India has had uninterrupted democratic governance longer than Germany, Italy or Japan. India has retained a liberal Constitution and federal political institutions.

Indian democracy provided the political stability that has enabled the state to build institutions and to put in place long-term policies that have enabled India to utilize the opportunities offered by globalization.

However, the same democratic institutions have failed the most vulnerable and the historically marginalized groups and communities. Between elections, the poor have no mechanisms to hold their elected leaders accountable. The influence of campaign finance, special interest groups and the dominance of big business further constrain the freedom of action of the elected representatives.

For the benefits of economic development to be equitably distributed requires recognition of the entitlement; and we know that entitlements cannot be realized without developing adequate capabilities of the poor. Only now – slowly, belatedly and reluctantly – the development community has begun to focus on the importance of the role of the government in the empowerment of the poor.

The poor remain poor not for want of resources but because they are not able to enforce their 'entitlements'

ILLUSTRATION: ARUNA

The founding fathers of India's Constitution had built into it provisions to create an even playing field. India was the first country in the world, even ahead of the US, to build affirmative action into the Constitution.

The inability of government to tackle poverty is not due to any inherent defect of democracy but rather to the weaknesses of political institutions and processes which have largely excluded the poor and vulnerable groups. Government works within a broadly-based consensus which is negotiated through complex bargaining amongst numerous stakeholders and powerful interest groups who have strong vested interests in preserving the *status quo*. There is therefore a limit to the ability of the government to persuade the groups that stand to benefit from the *status quo* to voluntarily give up their privileged position in the name of fair play or social justice. On the other hand the poor are largely unorganized and cannot be mobilized easily despite their large numbers. In the abridged version, democracy is reduced to the right of electoral participation periodically; and for the rest of the time the poor have come to be seen as bystanders in the game of politics. The government, faced with the conflicting demands of the articulate sections and the voiceless poor, has often sought safety by siding with the powerful.

The poor remain poor not because the solutions are not there or for want of resources. They are poor because they are not able to enforce their "entitlements". Investment in human resources development is essential to enabling the poor to realize their entitlements and to develop their capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization. g

(Adapted from the 12th Prem Bhatia Memorial Lecture on "Government in the 21st Century: Some Challenges of Governance and Democracy in India". Read the complete text on www.indian-buzz.com and www.gfiles.info)

Procrastinating Patil's a pain!

minister-bureaucrat collision course

UNION Home Minister Shivraj Patil's ouster in the run-up to the Presidential election is seemingly a body blow for bureaucrats in North Block. Before Pratibha Patil emerged a last-minute Congress nominee, the officers were congratulating one another in whispers. Not because their political boss was then the lone Congress name for the august office, but in anticipation of being spared the onerous task of having to work with a non-functional minister. But it was not to be. Their delight soon turned into despair.

Amendments pertaining to protection of witnesses under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), necessitated by witnesses turning hostile in the Jessica Lal and Priyadarshni Mattoo cases, are to come up in Parliament. The Police Reform Report prepared by Soli Sorabjee has failed to reach Parliament.

Now the officers are worried that, with a complacent minister at the helm, their tenure will end without any achievement worth the name and this will naturally cast a shadow on their Confidential Reports.

When Patil's name was almost certain for the office of President, the bureaucrats looked forward to Union Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde taking over the vacant portfolio in North Block. They had already started secretly meeting the result-oriented Shinde and developing personal rapport with him. These moves boomeranged after intelligence agencies reported the goings-on to Patil.

Now, an embittered Patil has decided to teach the *babu*s a lesson by indulging in more procrastination on all important matters!

Mayawati's iron hand at work

terror-struck officers

No calls to the Secretariat regarding transfers and postings – this was the diktat issued by Mayawati to her party MLAs and workers immediately after taking over as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister. Fearful of her wrath, no one disobeyed and the CM's office became "no-calling zone". The staff, that has always found tackling *desi neta*s a tough job, heaved a sigh of relief. The civil servants too read between the lines and refrained from contacting her office.

But there is one quarter from where the calls keep coming. Executive Engineers, Assistant SDOs and Junior Engineers are a different breed with a different mission. They keep enquiring about the likelihood of Mayawati visiting the areas under their jurisdiction. Since this does not relate to transfers and postings, her staff readily gives out the dates of her scheduled visits.

A day prior to the CM's visit, the concerned Executive Engineer, Assistant SDO and Junior Engineer can be seen travelling in a car along crucial roads. Their car is followed by a truck loaded with powdered lime, cement and charcoal. Wherever the team feels the ride is bumpy or notices potholes on the road, a repair is carried out. The road is also treated with powdered lime. The contingent then moves on. Dazed onlookers say the scene is reminiscent of a specialized army unit detecting land mines! Behind it is Mayawati's reputation for suspending even District Magistrates for lapses on her flying visits.

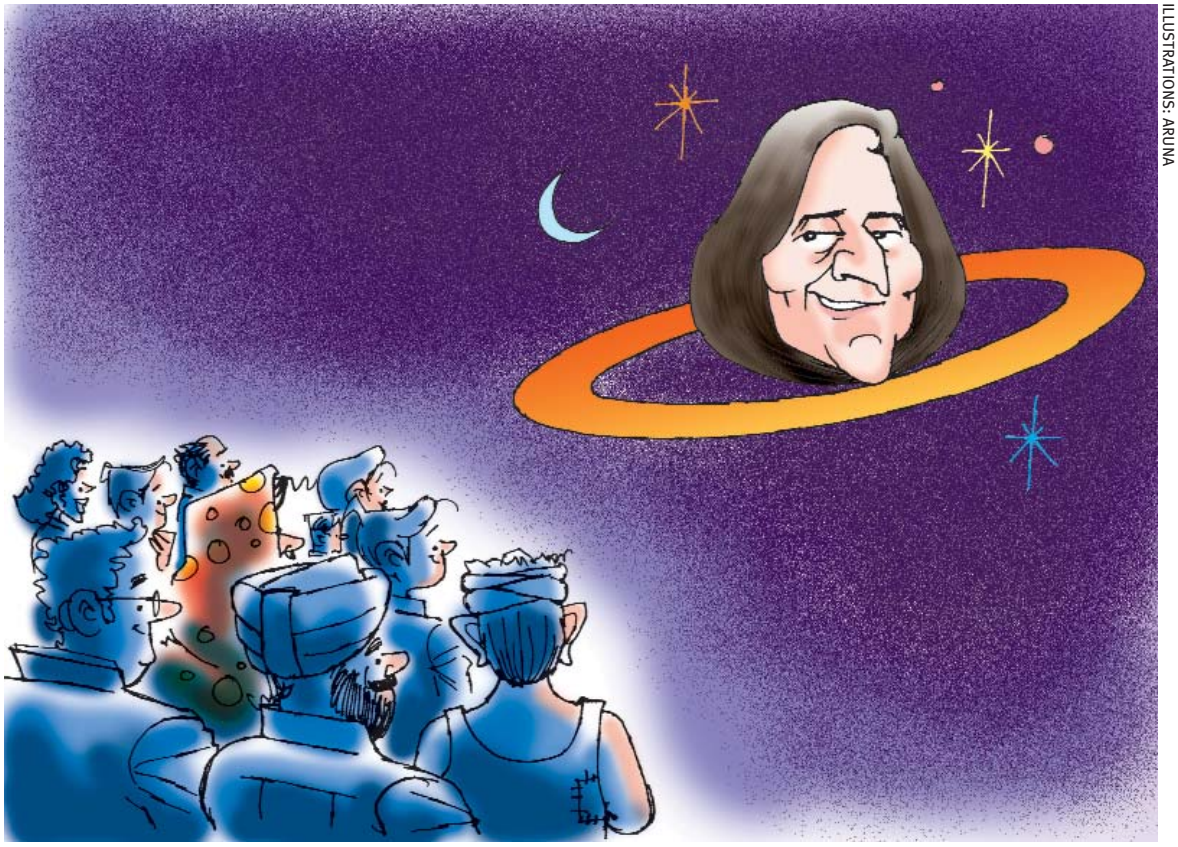
Amethi's Machiavellian Gandhi

plot-and-scheme rahul

KISHORI Lal Sharma of Ludhiana has been Sonia Gandhi's political representative in Amethi for the past eight years. After she and son Rahul contested successfully from Rae Bareli and Amethi in the last parliamentary polls, Sharma was entrusted with responsibility for Rae Bareli too. Another Sonia favourite is Manoj Mattoo, development representative for both constituencies. Sharma and Mattoo run their office in the Munshiganj Guest House in Amethi.

However, Rahul wants them moved to Rae Bareli so that he can replace them with his own trusted team in Amethi. But, since Sharma enjoys the patronage of Priyanka, he realizes that such a move will annoy both mum and sis. To avoid a direct confrontation in the family, he is cleverly creating a situation which will automatically ensure the duo's exit from Amethi.

The process has already begun with



ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

the formation of a core group of about 2000 of his loyalists in Amethi. The group is supposed to monitor various developmental schemes. Ramkrishna, a former security staffer for Rajiv Gandhi, is the new man in charge of this group. His assistant is a lady, Vijaya Murti. Besides developmental work, their job is to keep a watch on political developments in Amethi and send daily reports to Rahul. This new power centre in Amethi operates from 4, Munshiganj and the traffic of party workers has noticeably diverted to this address from the guest house!

Raja mugs tech terms

babus warm to greenhorn chief

AFTER Minister for Communication and Information Technology Dayanidhi Maran – son of the late Murasoli Maran and grandnephew of DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi – had to make an ignominious exit following a family feud back home, A Raja took over. But the new incumbent, who had come from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, is apparently having sleepless nights over the highly technical ministry that he now heads.

Apparently, the mere thought of meeting the Secretaries of the Departments of Telecom, Posts, and Information Technology, as well as senior BSNL and MTNL officials, and the media to boot, makes him break into a sweat. Raja, who is far from techno-savvy, was nervous over terms like GSM, WLL, broadband, NGN, USO, ISP and number portability.

Fearing comparision with Maran – a high-profile man well versed in communication technology – and anticipating becoming a laughing stock, Raja first chose to speak in general terms. Next, he asked his trusted lieutenants in the new ministry to give him a crash course in communication terminology. So a group of brilliant officers of DGM-level are taking turns in giving him lessons. And they warmly feel he will stand up to scrutiny in the monsoon session of Parliament. This is one instance when a minister's lack of knowledge and compulsion to learn has endeared him to bureaucrats.g

Darkness at noon

The complete and utter devastation of governance has been the lasting legacy of the Emergency

by M G DEVASAHAYAM

IN INDIA, "good governance" is perceived as tinkering with civil services and constituting commissions for administrative reforms, pay and perks. There is hardly any effort to rejuvenate institutions and instruments of governance that have atrophied and lost capacity to govern. This is a continuing tale of the past three decades, beginning with the Emergency.

On the night of June 25-26, 1975, the President of India signed a three-line proclamation:

"In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 352 of the Constitution, I, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India, by this Proclamation declare that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India is threatened by internal disturbances."

I was then District Magistrate of Chandigarh. That night was one of high drama in the Union Territory, though on a scale much smaller than in Delhi. Nevertheless, the happenings reflected the depravity into which governance of the country was being pushed in the name of "security of India".

On directions from the Delhi durbar, the Chief Minister of Punjab had called up the Chief Commissioner past midnight to say that Emergency had been declared and the press should be severely disciplined. He was specific that *The Tribune* be sealed and not allowed to come out the next morning. The Chief Minister even wanted the editor arrested under the dreaded Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA)!

The Chief Commissioner passed on the instructions to the police chief who expressed inability to carry out the wishes of the Chief Minister. Nevertheless, he visited *The Tribune* premises and advised those on duty not to publish any news unpalatable to the "powers-that-be" and left it at that.

This did not have much effect and the morning newspaper was its usual self. This infuriated the Chief Minister of Haryana. In his inimitable style, he threatened that if the Chandigarh Administration was not willing to raid *The Tribune*, seal its premises and arrest its editor, he would get it done through the Haryana Police. For this purpose, he would not hesitate even to "take over" the media premises and buildings! Information was trickling in about the President's Proclamation of Emergency without the Union Cabinet's recommendation, and the detention of top leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai and Atal Behari Vajpayee even before the declaration was signed. *The Tribune* reported these arrests.

With rumours spreading like wildfire, there was a danger of law and order in Chandigarh getting out of control. Prompted by the Delhi durbar, both Chief Ministers were breathing down our neck and could virtually take over the Administration and seal *The Tribune* if they decided to gang up. To ward off these eventualities, I decided to take charge despite absence of any official communication from the Union Government regarding Emergency or any other instruction.

I got a copy of the presidential proclamation from the Intelligence Bureau and imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC throughout the UT and got an Administration official appointed Censor Officer under the Defence of India Rules.

This was how the Emergency era commenced. During its 20-month run, the country's hard-earned freedom was extinguished and a parliamentary democracy turned into personal dictatorship. Fundamental rights stood suspended. The press was muffled. People moved in hushed silence, stunned and traumatised by the draconian goings-

'In exercise of powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 352 ... I, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India, by this Proclamation declare that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India is threatened by internal disturbances'

PHOTO: VIJENDER TYAGI

Raj Narain, N Sanjeeva Reddy, Chandrashekhar, Jayaprakash Narayan after release from jail

on. The bulk of the civil service crawled when asked to bend. The higher judiciary bowed to the dust and was willing to rule that, under Emergency, citizens did not even have the right to life. Politicians of all hues, barring honourable exceptions, lay prostrate.

A compilation of activities of the President, Parliament, Judiciary and Executive during Emergency would reveal as to how governance and its institutions and instruments were ravaged and subjected to severe onslaught.

WITH proclamation of Emergency, the President had suspended enforcement of Fundamental Rights under Article 14 (Equality before Law), Article 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty) and several clauses of Article 22 (Protection against Detention). As if this was not bad enough, courts were barred from pronouncing on the validity of any presidential proclamation; MISA detainees were denied relief under common law and were not to be told the grounds and period of detention, and the PM was given immunity from legal proceedings.

The Emergency agenda has been aptly summarized by Nayantara Sehgal in her book on Indira Gandhi: "The essence of Emergency was the pinnacle-power – a position above the multitude, unaccountable and unchallengeable – it sought to guarantee the Prime Minister." The Shah Commission fully endorsed this view and said: "Mrs Gandhi, in her anxiety to continue in power, brought about a situation which directly contributed to her continuance in power and also generated forces which sacrificed the interests of many to serve the ambitions of the few."

The Emergency was far more devious than just denial of personal liberty, arrest and torture of a few thousand individuals and forced sterilization by the State. It was about basic violations of democratic norms and crude attempts to legitimize a new type of regime and new criteria of allocation of rights and obligations. It was the abrogation of any sense of boundary or restraint in exercise of power, and striking growth of arbitrariness and arrogance with which citizens were turned into "subjects".

The tragedy is that 'centralized misgovernance' persists! Unbridled corruption, criminality are the outcome; India has drifted towards 'state kleptocracy' since Emergency

The Emergency ripped apart the delicately crafted and carefully nurtured fabric of India's democracy. Governance was devastated by the imposition of a highly concentrated apparatus of power on a fundamentally federal society and the turning over of this centralized apparatus for personals survival and family aggrandizement.

The tragedy is that "centralized misgovernance" persists! Emergency excesses are benchmarked and have become reference points for gross violation of human rights by fascist-minded "leaders" even today.

Unbridled corruption and criminality are the outcome and India has been drifting towards "state kleptocracy" since the Emergency. This is a system wherein ruling establishments arrogate the power and resources of the state and indulge in wanton misgovernance. State kleptocracy has rotted the moral fibre of the nation as a whole and institutions – legislative, executive and judicial – have been reduced to nullity.

This is the real legacy of the Emergency and the root cause of inequity and injustice we are witnessing amid the country's "GDP boom"! We can ignore this only at our peril! g

(The writer, a former IAS officer, is managing trustee of SUSTAIN, a Chennai NGO for urban issues)

PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

Naresh Chandra (left) and NN Vohra: Meritocrats showing the way

MANDARIN MATTERS | babudom's other face

Officers sans godfathers

Padma Vibhushan Naresh Chandra and NN Vohra never allowed themselves to be politicized

by NARENDRA SISODIA

THIS year's Padma Vibhushan awardees include two distinguished civil servants – Naresh Chandra and NN Vohra. In these *babu*-bashing times, this is an act of courage. Civil servants are no longer perceived as either civil or serving.

Both share many qualities, but are also very different personalities. Both are self-made, with no godfathers. Both received a solid grounding in field work in their states and held tough and demanding mainstream jobs. One handled militancy in Punjab, the other in Jammu and Kashmir. They held the positions of Defence Secretary and Home Secretary and advised PMs of their time. Chandra became Governor of Gujarat and later India's Ambassador in Washington. Vohra became Director, India International Centre.

Both were always accessible and in touch with the ordinary man. Their commitment to public interest was exemplary. They worked hard, although Chandra would never give that impression. He never missed the *Mahabharata* serial or a good Hollywood movie. He once made a CM and the entire Council of Ministers wait 15 minutes because he would not miss the Man of the Match award ceremony during an Indo-Pak one-dayer. No one minded.

Both have a sense of humour. In extremely difficult times in the Defence Ministry, Vohra would break into chaste Punjabi to relate funny stories or say something witty. Nothing would ever perturb Chandra and the more complex the problem, the more he would relax or laugh. Both fought bullies within the government and outside.

They were practitioners of emotional intelligence long before Daniel Goleman made it popular. They are glowing examples of how a public servant can be pragmatic and yet adhere to values. They would go to any lengths to protect and advance the careers of their honest team workers. Vohra offered himself for a CBI inquiry to protect an innocent younger colleague.

They shone brilliantly in international fora. At the Pentagon, Chandra kept a bunch of policy wonks spellbound with his masterly articulation of Indo-Pak relations and the Kashmir question. Those who saw him on American TV following India's nuclear tests know what he can do to defend the country's cause.

They worked closely with politicians but never allowed themselves to be politicized. They expressed their views fearlessly. They were practical, but never manipulative. They are both extraordinarily good human beings. They will do you a good deed without your knowing of it. They enjoy the respect of politicians of all hues because of their commitment to the larger public interest. They are seen as problem-solvers.

The real value of these Padma Vibhushan awards is the lesson they hold for the younger generation of public servants. In recognizing their contribution to public service, the government has conveyed a strong message that merit, integrity and commitment to public interest count and that political neutrality is not a disadvantage. And that it is still all right to be a civil servant! g

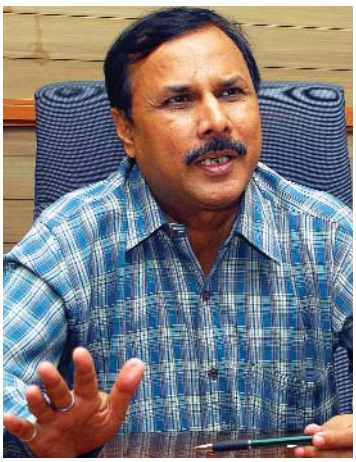
In recognizing their contribution to public service, the government has conveyed a message that merit, integrity and commitment to public interest count

(The writer is a former Finance Secretary and currently Director, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses)

by ARUN LAVANIA

Of tax headaches and mouse clicks

CORRUPTION, inefficiency and lack of innovation have been the hallmarks of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) with political pressure taking a toll of good governance. Revenue collection from property tax has always been a challenge for the MCD and a nightmare for tax-payers. Approximately 8,50,000 tax-payers contribute hundreds of crores of rupees. Touts in the MCD have a field day, charging huge commissions for filling in forms. Financial leakage ran into tens of crores of rupees for want of a data-base. Local leaders thrived in connivance with MCD officials and the honest tax-payer feared the inspector *raj*.



PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

Prior to April 1, 2004, house tax was calculated on cost basis, which included cost of land and of construction. But soaring land prices over the years created disparity in house tax collected from property owners in the same neighbourhood. So the system of Unit Area Method was introduced. Under it, area was multiplied by the unit base value fixed for different localities to arrive at the house tax due from individual property owners. It was also decided to collect tax online but vested interests decided otherwise and the manual filling in of tax forms continued for another two years.

When Akhilesh Kumar Ambasht, a 1987-batch Indian Forest Service officer of the AGMUT cadre, joined the MCD as Assessor and Collector on December 26, 2006, he was shocked to see a fall of Rs 200 crore in annual property tax collection – from Rs 900 crore the previous year to Rs 700 crore. A doctorate in ecology, the officer made it a priority to make property tax collection in Delhi online. A sister concern of Infosys was engaged to develop software. Ambasht provided guidelines at every stage of programming and soon the MCD was ready to go hi-tech. The company was paid Rs 9 lakh for the job. It had charged Rs 1.5 crore from the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for similar work.

After property tax collection became online from April 1 this year, the revenue collection has gone up to Rs 800 crore and is expected to increase further. "The new system of tax collection is the first of its kind in the country. Besides plugging financial leakage, the online process will save tax-payers from middlemen and harassment. Also, with the complete data-base of tax-payers, pinning defaulters will be just a mouse click away," says the happy Ambasht.g

High thinking, clean living

ANIL Kumar Singh, a 1984-batch Indian Forest Service officer of the Assam cadre, has vast experience in planning and implementation of a wide variety of schemes in sanitation and hygiene, environment conservation, potable water and child education at the grass-roots level. He went global in his developmental mission after joining the world-renowned Sulabh International Academy of Environmental Sanitation, as Chief Executive Officer in January 2005. "Poor access to potable water and adequate sanitation is a global curse," he says. The global initiative to promote clean living and good health propelled the Academy into evolving and putting into practice new strategies and technologies in African countries.

Then, Singh led the Academy into formulating an Education, Capacity Building & Training Programme on sanitation technologies for African countries with a long partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). Professionals in these countries were trained through rigorous workshops, and helped to formulate projects, provide logistics and finally implement at grass-roots level under the technical and administrative supervision of the Academy. Since then over 50 professionals from 13 African countries – Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Mali, Ghana, Cote d'Ivorie, Nigeria and Senegal have been trained at the Academy campus. The officer, frequently travelling to these countries, is overwhelmed by the adoption rate and success of the transferred technologies at the ground level.

When not in the African countries, Singh spends time in the resettlement colony of Madipur in Delhi, training traditional waste-pickers in managing city garbage through vermi-composting. Sulabh's Solid Waste Management (SWM) project has been running in Madipur since September 2005. "SWM is a grave urban problem," says Singh. "Training waste-pickers in vermi-composting can help them realize additional income, generate employment and tackle the menace of urban waste at low cost." Two thousand waste-picker families have already been trained. An additional welcome feature of this project is that it involves local communities and local government.g

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Courting the king

The Kashmiri politician has mastered the skill of anticipating a sinking ship and adroitly shifting his weight to another *by* ANIL TYAGI

WHEN Dr Farooq Abdullah ruled Jammu and Kashmir, he was known to forcefully assert that he and he alone was the Chief Minister. In his turn, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed coolly declared he was the only CM who could deliver. Now, with Ghulam Nabi Azad at the helm, the Valley asks: "Do we have a CM nowadays?"

Yet, despite his singular style of functioning, the 57-year-old Azad has the state's reins firmly in his grasp. He is the state's third Congress Chief Minister after GM Sadique and Syed Mir Qasim. An evergreen Congressman, Azad has alternated between a Cabinet berth and a General Secretary's post - depending on whether the party is in power or out. He has been General Secretary nine times and a Cabinet minister umpteen times. He once confided to a close associate: "Keep showing your face to the king unfazed, regardless of his displeasure. A day will come when the king will start giving you assignments."

Azad's original name was Ghulam Nabi Bhatt. He was born on March 7, 1949 to a contractor in Soti village, Doda district. His uncle, Ghulam Rasool Bhatt, was an MLC from the teachers' constituency. He harboured enormous respect for freedom fighter Chandra Shekhar Azad and so changed his own name to Azad. Inspired by his uncle, the young Ghulam Nabi Bhatt became Ghulam Nabi Azad.

He joined politics in 1973 after earning an MSc in zoology. His first political assignment was as Secretary of the Congress committee of Blessa block. But he wanted to head the state's Youth Congress. The state Congress Committee chief, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, was reluctant to appoint him without recommendation from the Centre.

It dawned on Azad that he was doomed to stagnation in his state without a godfather in Delhi. Luckily, he found his advocate in an influential journalist close to the then Minister of State for Home, Om Mehta. The journalist requested Mehta to put in a word for Azad with Sayeed. And, since Mehta was also from Kishtwar of Jammu region, he developed a soft corner for Azad and made the necessary recommendation to Sayeed. Azad thus achieved his first important post in 1975.

The Emergency intervened; and in 1977, the Janata Party swept the general election. The Gandhis were fighting for political survival. Sanjay Gandhi was in the forefront of Congress politics with his army of firebrand youth leaders. A farsighted Azad moved to Delhi. Bereft of the means to rent a place on his own, the young man shared a room with members of the Sanjay brigade on Curzon Road. Then Sanjay arranged for him to live in a *barsati* at 70 South Avenue with Syed Sibte Razi, now Governor of Jharkhand. Azad began to ensure his omnipresence before the "king". Within a year, Sanjay anointed him General Secretary of the All-India Youth Congress Committee.

Meanwhile, friend Hasan Ahmed floated the All-India Youth Muslim Congress Conference and made Azad its president, too. Subsequently, Hasan was forced out of the organization and Azad was its sole custodian till 1981.

The Kashmiri politician has mastered the skill of watching over a flotilla of boats simultaneously. Anticipating the sinking of one, he adroitly transfers his weight to another. His astuteness saw him keep his head above water under a succession of Congress chiefs - Rajiv Gandhi, PV Narasimha Rao, Sitaram Kesari and Sonia Gandhi.

In 1982, he was elected from Washim in Maharashtra and was inducted into the Union Cabinet as Deputy Minister, Company Affairs and Law. Soon, he was promoted to Minister of State. Azad's first stint as minister saw him strengthening his network in Delhi. In the general election after Indira Gandhi's death, he won again from Washim and became Minister of State for Home Affairs in the Rajiv Gandhi Cabinet. From 1982 to 1990, he consolidated his position in both party and "palace", so to speak.

However, in the 1989 elections, Sharad Pawar - then Agriculture Minister - prevented Azad from contesting the Washim seat. The next year, Hasan Ahmed - also a friend of Farooq Abdullah - managed a Rajya Sabha berth from Kashmir for Azad. After Rajiv's death in 1991, Narasimha Rao became Prime Minister and President of the Congress. Azad made a

This is the first time a politician from Jammu has taken over the reins of the state. People harbour expectations.... He has chosen to maintain a status quo, often working in splendid isolation

All the CM's men

Anil Goswami, *Principal Secretary to CM*
Nayeem Akhtar, *Tourism Secretary*
Gopal Sharma, *DGP*
Vijay Bakaya, *Chief Secretary*
Peerzada Mohd. Sayeed, *Education Minister*
Madan Lal Sharma, *MP*
Saifuddin Soz, *Union Minister for Water Resources*

PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

Evergreen Congressman: Three PMs have relied on Azad

smooth transition to the new government, becoming Cabinet Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. He was later shifted to Tourism and Civil Aviation.

LK Advani's *rathyatra* catapulted the BJP into political prominence and the 1989 election saw it register a quantum jump in seats in the Lok Sabha. During the Janata Dal's stint in power from 1996 to 1998, Azad emerged as the most powerful General Secretary in the Congress. Then came Atal Behari Vajpayee and, during the saffron rule, Sonia began to consolidate her position in the party. She needed someone to call upon at any time and Azad fitted the bill. Soon, he was indispensable in the "palace". All along, he looked after political affairs of the Northeast, Karnataka, UP, Arunachal Pradesh and sundry important party wings. By 2002, he was a force to reckon with.

Yet, palaces are mercurial places - and one basic law is prevalent. The most powerful man is shunted somewhere with a second-best sop. In 2002, much against his will, Azad had to move back to Kashmir as President of the state Congress. His opponents in Delhi cheered at what they took to be the beginning of the end of his political career in the strife-torn state. But destiny came to his rescue when the People's Democratic Front and Congress won the Assembly polls. The power-sharing agreement between the two parties accorded Sayeed a three-year term as CM.

Azad campaigning with Maulana Abbas Ansari in Sopore in 1996

PM Manmohan Singh settled on the experienced Azad to help him run the UPA coalition government and the Kashmir politician was back in Delhi as Union Minister for Urban Development, Law and Parliamentary Affairs.

But, when Sayeed's three-year term got over, the chief ministership devolved on the unwilling Azad. His reluctance stems from his - fairly accurate - perception that his detractors in the party will spare no effort to reduce his stature from a national to a provincial leader.

THE political agenda of the Congress and its Chief Minister in Kashmir is yet to become clear. This is the first time that a politician from Jammu has taken over the reins of the state. The people harbour many expectations of him, including fine-tuning the state bureaucracy. However, he has chosen to maintain a *status quo*, working in isolation yet governing in a bureaucratic manner. He has brought in more Central funds but fundamentally nothing has changed.

He is a hardworking CM, not given to speaking or sleeping much and touring a good deal. Still in the nationalistic mould, he has failed to get into the groove of state politics. Congress workers and MLAs find him inaccessible and in no need of them. His latest fiat has made the Secretariat out of bounds for party workers. Even Congress MLAs are not allowed to bring in complainants.

"He dreams of becoming a cyber CM. He talks like Chandrababu Naidu, claims he will take information technology to every village of the state. But it is unemployment, education, revival of industry and return of the Pandits that should be his priorities," comments a senior journalist.

The countdown for next year's Assembly polls has begun and Azad is determined to prove he alone can turn the tide in favour of the Congress even against heavy odds. He has reportedly assured the high command of a two-thirds majority, which will destroy the myth that the Congress cannot gain absolute majority in the Assembly on its own. Azad's track record demands that his assurance not be dismissed. And adding drama is the fact that Azad and his former mentor, Sayeed, will be pitted against each other in what will be the battle of a lifetime for both. g

Power to the Common

The inspiring story of government-community partnership in Nagaland

THE programme of communitisation is about substantially improving the quality and delivery of public services such as the elementary school, the rural health centre, power distribution at the grass roots and so on by harnessing the social capital available in the community. It is a partnership between the government and the community, and involves empowerment and capacity-building in a legislative framework. It has been implemented successfully in Nagaland with the enactment of the Nagaland Communitisation of Public Services and Institutions Act, 2002.

A vast network of institutions and services exist in India but in a moribund state. The reason is poor management. The huge infrastructure is marked by non-functioning equipment and employees without commitment or motivation. Power theft, estimated at over 50 per cent, is the prime reason for the poor financial health of State Electricity Corporations or Undertakings.

One option is to launch an efficiency drive. The experience, however, has been that even in well-governed states the situation is unsatisfactory. Officers and ministers have suspended absent employees on the spot. But results are transient and localized.

Another option is privatization. However, the poor suffer in this situation. The poor are dependent on the government-provided set up. Large-scale privatization would also affect a large number of government employees.

There is a third option – to combine government funds, expertise and regulatory powers with the social capital of the user community. If the empowered are not motivated, why not empower the motivated? This is communitisation – in which the government shares ownership of its institutions and service delivery infrastructure with the user community and transfers day-to-day management responsibilities to the user community. It is not just empowerment but involves a variety of concepts such as decentralization, delegation, building capacity, and so on. Hence the need for a new word, "communitisation".

The triple T Approach

Communitisation is based on the triple T approach: Trust the user community; Train it to discharge its newfound responsibilities; Transfer governmental powers and resources in respect of management. It is a new approach to governance, different both from governmental management and from privatization. It is a kind of privatization, but in the hands of the user community.

Nagaland has been in difficulty for over five decades because of the conflict situation which also leads to cynicism. An exercise, "Imagine Nagaland", was undertaken in 2000 in which the young, the adult, the retired and the old – from government as well as from civil society – discussed the vision of Nagaland. A list of priorities emerged. One was to improve the delivery system of government services. Naga society is rich in social capital: strong tribal and village community bonds exist in traditional institutions which are organized, effective and participatory.

The concept of communitisation was mooted in mid-2001 among officials and civil society leaders. Feedback was obtained by December. The state Cabinet adopted the proposal in January 2002 and an Ordinance was promulgated by the Governor. In March, the Assembly passed the Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act, which is the first of its kind in India and perhaps in the world.

Salient features of the Act

The Act provided for Boards/Committees to represent the user communities. The members were to be representatives of real stakeholders, right agents and personnel having expertise. Strong social capital and strong agents show strong results. If either the social capital or the agent is weak, the result is weak. If both are weak, the social capi-

Third Party Assessment

Impact assessment of the programme was carried out by Organizations Development and Excellence Consultants (ODEL), Chennai during June-July 2004, funded by UNICEF.

These were their findings:

- Communitisation is welcomed by the village community.
- VHCS/VECS improved conditions of health centres/schools by galvanizing voluntary contribution of material, labour and funds.
- Improved staff and teacher attendance and attitude to work was noticed.
- Enrolment showed steady improvement in all communitised schools with 0% drop-out rate in 23 of the 28 sample villages.
- Teacher attendance improved to more than 90% in 18 out of 28 sample schools.
- Unauthorized absence was eliminated in 17 of 28 sample villages.
- Improved attendance of teachers reflected in improved attendance of children in the range of 70-100%, passing rates improved from 75-100% in 24 out of 28 sample schools; 100% passing percentage recorded in some sample villages.

Man

Naga social capital is rich due to strong tribal and village bonds

If the empowered are not motivated, why not empower the motivated? This is communitisation – in which the government shares ownership of its institutions and service delivery infrastructure with the user community

tal remains dormant. The quality of functioning of the committee will depend on the quality of its members and this essentially explains why the programme has not worked uniformly. Certain powers were to be transferred to the Board/Committee, including disbursement of salary and the power to exercise "no work, no pay". Government assets were to be transferred to the community through an MoU. A fund was to be created for each Committee/Board to credit salaries or grants and contributions from different sources. The government was to undertake an assisting, monitoring and regulatory role.

Elementary education was taken up first, followed by grass-roots healthcare and power management. Sector-wise rules were framed to implement the Act. The rules reflected specific variations across sectors.

Also, being a new programme in the government, a variety of procedural issues had to be tackled. For instance, provisions of the Treasury Rules and the Financial and Cognate Power Rules, 1964, were amended.

The politics of reform

Some people said the government was "passing the buck" to the community. Through active involvement of political leadership, influential members of the bureaucracy, civil society and the church, apprehensions and misconceptions were taken care of and the programme got going.

Within six months, proxy employees were weeded out, expenditure on pay and allowances stood reduced; employees were paid on time; there was improved attendance and commitment of employees was evident. In the healthcare sector, a higher proportion of employees stayed on in postings; availability of medicines improved; jurisdiction of each health centre was worked out for the first time; regular cleaning of health centre premises and villages was a new feature, among other things.

The programme has been extended to other sectors such as rural water supply, rural roads and rural tourism also. g

(The author is currently Secretary, Steel)

- Clear trend of children shifting from private schools to government schools in 17 out of 28 sample villages; private school closed in 1 village.
- Improved availability of textbooks with 100 schools receiving textbook grants in time.

Health sector

- Increased number of patients and availability of medicines in health centres.
- Attendance of health functionaries improved to over 90% in all sample villages.
- Unauthorised absence reduced to 3-5% in all sample villages.
- Improved absence of good quality medicines in almost all sample villages.
- Patients coming to government health centres from private doctors in all villages of 3 districts.

Power sector

- Definite improvement in quality and continuity of power in all sample villages.
- Dramatic increase in revenues of Power Department.
- Successfully tackled the problem of power theft.

Transformation in hell

A new, deeply personal account of the Magsaysay Award-winning police officer's use of revolutionary management tools and devices to administer India's most notorious jail in the mid-1990s

Kiran Bedi (above and below) with Tihar inmates: Humanism to the fore

MY first impression of Tihar jail, when I took over in 1993, was that I was myself imprisoned. As far as the jail administration was concerned, there was interference from everywhere, mostly from VIPs seeking favoured treatment for a friend or relative. Corruption was ubiquitous. Everything came for a price – meetings with friends or relatives, purchases from the canteen, food from outside. Even prisoners receiving gift packages from outside, basic items such as clean clothes, would have to part with money or even a portion of the gift package before receiving it.

So where does one start in order to effect any kind of transformation in a system riddled from top to bottom with callousness, corruption, cruelty, indifference? They all knew I had come from the Delhi Police. And betting was already on about how long it would be before I would request a quick transfer out of this hell.

My immediate dilemma was, with whom could I work in order to get started? I had examined the confidential records of all the jail officials and staff and virtually none of them was clean. But if I did not work with them, where on earth would I find new people? So, like a CMD, I decided to go with what I was saddled with. There were few options. I had no choice but to try and transform them and put their abilities to test.

Human management consists of accepting the fact that everybody does not come out of the same mould. Everybody is not equal. A talented and experienced manager will recognize immediately who shares his philosophy, who is borderline, and who is intractable. To those who share your vision you give trust and extra work. You groom the borderline cases and try and carry them with you. But you have to show the tough, formidable side of yourself to those who are incorrigible. There are several facets of this formidable side. And, over a period, I used several rewards-and-punishment weapons in my arsenal. I rewarded a majority of people. I dismissed many. To some I gave voluntary retirements (actually this was compulsory retirement!), others I suspended, and some, who deserved exemplary punishment, I chargesheeted and made sure they went to jail.

Human management involves accepting that everybody does not come out of the same mould. A talented and experienced manager will recognize who shares his philosophy

Being compassionate does not mean that you can allow people to fool you or think they can get away with dereliction of duty or breaking the law. Never continue to look at everybody with the same eye. Understand who is who and place them accordingly and deal with the difficulties as they arise.

For example, I had to tell one deputy superintendent to stay at home and collect his pay there because he was a negative influence in the jail. At first he was delighted that he had not been suspended and he could relax at home. He had no idea what was in store for him. As time went by, his children began to ask him embarrassing questions that struck at the roots of his manhood – "Daddy, what happened? Your leave is over, how come you're not going back to work?"

He finally came to me and requested that I call him back to work because the atmosphere at home was becoming unbearable.

The staff was also insecure. In fact, many of them lived in dread of the inmates – the thugs and gangsters – who constantly threatened them and their families with death in the outside world. In fact, the staff would repeatedly confide to me that they had no security cover to protect their homes and families from a violent attack by released prisoners or members of their gang. Attacks on the staff, even in prison, were common.

Luckily, I was able to document the transformations we started – the reform

Prisoners of learning

The *panchayat*s were gradually integrated into the prison management system. We told them that their environment was, indeed, a township like the New Delhi Municipal Corporation. Many moments are indelibly etched in my memory. They are living snapshots of prisoners at study in open classrooms under shady trees, the ground strewn with books and bags. The school bell would sound at 9 am every day. The attendance was phenomenal, almost 100 per cent. I would also begin my rounds at 9 am. I would put on a pair of comfortable tennis shoes, my *pathan* suit and a jacket, and visit all the classes for two hours, congratulating the students, asking questions, answering questions, thumping backs in a congratulatory fashion. And the responses were spontaneous. The prisoner-students would show me what they had written. The *panchayat* teachers would proudly show me the long attendance registers in which the Ps (for "present") far overshadowed the absentees. The education *panchayat* would even conduct fortnightly tests.

process – in the photographs I regularly took. Today, I treasure these slides. Some that I treasure most record how we reached out to adolescents through the Sampark Sabha (communication group) meetings. The initial steps in the process were to encourage some of our more motivated officials to talk to the young inmates – not as officials but as people interested in their lives and welfare and future.

The corollary to bridging the communication gap was the formation of voluntary, autonomous bodies – the *panchayat*s. We had *panchayat*s dedicated to education, festivals, hygiene, catering, canteen, discipline, depression management, you name it. We selected prisoners for specific *panchayat* leadership duties, trained them, and taught them the value of self-governance. They were taught to assume responsibility for their own lives as well as of their community. The goal was to develop a humane collective, corrective community.

WHAT I found most gratifying – even touching – was that when prisoners were released the books they had been given in prison, even exercise books, were almost invariably the most precious part of the belongings they took with them. Prison officials were worried that this would deplete the institution's book resources, but I encouraged people to take books away. In the books, they were taking home with them perhaps the most valuable experience of their lives. These books had been donated.

I was able to document the transformations we started–the reform process–in the photographs I regularly took. I treasure these slides

And I assured our officials that book donations would continue – I would make sure of that – and that our repositories of knowledge would always be full. And the books continued to pour in – from schools, from institutions, from individuals.

But this was not an inward-looking transformation. We began to link the jail with the outside world in line with our "C3 model" – corrective, collective, community-based. On Christmas, for example, we would invite groups from outside to entertain the inmates. Children sang songs. We brought in musical instruments so prisoners could learn to play them. On Christmas an inmate would become the official Santa Claus. Gurpurab was celebrated with great reverence. On Gandhi Jayanti, a prisoner was chosen to play the role of Mahatma Gandhi. And, when this role-playing Gandhiji, dressed in the traditional dhoti, walked in, prisoners began to touch his feet with reverence. This, more than anything else, was a signal that a transformation had taken root. g

(Exclusively adapted from a closed-door interaction with government employees, Ms Bedi is currently Director, Bureau of Police Reform and Development)

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Her own distant drummer

The ex-IAS officer and Magsaysay winner who founded the Kisan Mazdoor Shakti Sangathan and spearheaded the RTI campaign maps her journey into uncharted waters

IN the last 15 years, I have come to understand that there are many bridges that have to be built. I built my own. The first was a counter-migration bridge over which I crossed from the city of my residence, Delhi, to Rajasthan. I first worked with the SWRC Tilonia, which now calls itself Barefoot College, from 1975 to 1983. I left Tilonia because I wanted to be a sociopolitical non-party activist. Some of my colleagues and I moved farther into the heart of rural Rajasthan and lived in mud huts. We also kept a goat. Our goal was to reach out to our fellow beings who lived there and help them empower themselves through a deeper understanding of democracy as well as grassroots ownership of democratic institutions. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a movement that propelled college graduates and others into what was called alternative development work. Many of my college-mates, including my husband Sujit – Bunker Roy – plunged into this arena. Bands of young men and women with privileged backgrounds and educational levels that would equip them for jobs in the plum sectors of the economy marched out, like Bunker, into remote, ignored areas. They included Anil Sadgopal, now renowned for his work in education, and Dunu Roy, who moved to remote Shahdol in Madhya Pradesh after jettisoning his successful career with IIT.

It's not enough to join the IAS and cop out on social responsibility by pleading political bosses do not want you to implement the Constitution!

What inspired Bunker to forge tools to craft an interaction between specialists and technicians and rural folk? What motivated Dunu to start an apprentice workshop to train the unskilled and the landless? Why did I quit the Indian Administrative Service in 1974, after joining in 1968, to start marching to the beat of my own distant drummer? It is significant that the word "Naxalite" was coined in 1968. The beginning of Naxalism – the birth of extremist responses to socio-economic problems – was a social symptom of the rampaging disease of inequality. Many of us who ventured out to develop alternative solutions were assaulted by guilt. We were from privileged backgrounds but what had we given back to the country that had given us privileges?

The monogram of SWRC shows a farmer and a professional holding hands – one with a sheaf of corn in one hand, the other with a hat. It is a symbol of equality. I left SWRC because I wanted to work in a political framework but not within the ambit of a political party framework. As a woman, I say my life is a revolution. My life is political. I am fighting against inequality, every step, every moment of the day. As a person, if I were born in a Dalit family in rural India, I would be battling inequalities. Any fight against inequality is a political battle. We have narrowed the definition of politics into party politics, into being members of a political party, and we have disowned our role in shaping the country.

It is not enough to be a specialist. It is not enough to go to IITs. It is not enough to join the IAS and then cop out on fundamental social responsibility by pleading the excuse that your political bosses do not want you to implement the articles of the Constitution! A government official's allegiance is to the Constitution and not to a political master. I often asked myself the meaning of political empowerment. Does it mean that I must leave everything and join a political party and contest elections? Or does it mean I must use democracy better?

I am a fervent believer in Indian democracy. Not only have we had regular elections but we have also had the courage to respect and preserve dissent. No matter who is in power, we have people speaking against them. I believe India is a better democracy than the US. In the US, I recently found people were scared to show a spoof on President George W. Bush publicly. But we have tremendous democratic pluralistic space.

But look at the flip side. If I contest elections in my area, I will lose not because I haven't done any good work but because I do not belong to the Rawat caste in a Rawat-dominated area. If democracy has to be delineated by the parochial definitions of caste and religion, then we have lost out somewhere. But a great plus – apart from the right to dissent – is that the rural poor of India vote in greater numbers than the urban privileged and the middle class. The rural poor understand the power of democracy. They understand that at least once a year someone asks them for their vote, and during this campaign period the voters are VIPs – they are the real sovereigns choosing the people who are supposed to understand their special needs and to serve them. It is largely the impact of the rural vote that led to progressive legislation such as the Right to Information and Employment Guarantee Acts. g

(Exclusively adapted from a closed-door interactive session with PSU employees.)

Highrise high risk for Hindon

Ghaziabad Development Authority flouts rules in cahoots with builder

by HEMANT TYAGI

A residential highrise complex proposed to be built next to the Hindon Air Base in Ghaziabad poses the risk of leading to air crashes as well as exposing the defence installation to terrorist attack if allowed to go ahead. Amazingly, the builders - the SVP Group - are aware that the proposed complex, Gulmohur Greens, violates the Aircraft Act of 1934 and actually use this fact to tout the project in the brochure. "Located right next to the Hindon Air base, which does not permit the building of sky-scrapers in the area, Gulmohur Greens is the highest project in the vicinity, providing you with an unrestricted view of the greens and an unparalleled vision of the horizon," says the brochure.

The existence of the brochure and the section on Gulmohur Greens on the company website (www.svp-group.in) clearly indicate that the project has already been sanctioned by the Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA) and that the Air Force has not blocked it.

According to Section 9A, sub-sections (i) and (ii) of the Act, the Central government may direct the competent authorities that no building or structure be constructed or erected or tree be planted on any land within a radius of 20 km from the "aerodrome reference point". Section 2A stipulates that "aerodrome reference point" means a designated point established in the horizontal plane at or near the geometric centre of that part of the aerodrome reserved for the departure or landing of aircraft.

The Hindon air base is a strategic defence installation. It houses fighter aircraft and helicopter squadrons. It also aims to provide security cover to the nation's capital in the wake of an air invasion. The air base is used for emergency landing and take-off of fighters. Hindon played a major role in the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 when numerous air attacks on enemy targets were launched from it.

The proposed highrises will endanger fighter pilots' lives by compromising safety during landing and take-off. The top floors (the 23-acre complex will have buildings with seven floors as well as duplex apartments with eight to nine floors) may well provide a spy base for terrorists.

Safety considerations prompted the Air Force authorities to construct only three-storey flats within the premises of the air base. Further, the GDA has in the past denied permission to build a fourth floor to residents of the nearby colonies - Rajendra Nagar and Lajpat Nagar. In the case of the SVP Group, though, it broke with precedence.

Two IAF Public Relations Officers contacted by gfiles merely said they did not know of the matter and that Hindon did not fall within their jurisdiction, anyway. g

(Questionnaires sent by gfiles to the Chairman of GDA and the SVP group were not replied to.)

What the Aircraft Act says...

9A. ...(i)... no building or structure shall be constructed or erected, or no tree shall be planted, on any land within such radius, not exceeding twenty kilometres from the aerodrome reference point, as may be specified in the notification and where there is any building, structure or tree on such land, also direct the owner or the person having control of such building, structure or tree to demolish such building or structure or, as the case may be, to cut such tree within such period as may be specified in the notification; (ii)... no building or structure higher than such height as may be specified in the notification shall be constructed or erected, or no tree, which is likely to grow or ordinarily grows higher than such height as may be specified in the notification, shall be planted, on any land within such radius, not exceeding twenty kilometres from the aerodrome reference point, as may be specified in the notification and where the height of any building or structure or tree on such land is higher than the specified height, also direct the owner or the person having control of such building, structure or tree to reduce the height thereof so as not to exceed the specified height, within such period as may be specified in the notification.

The SVP Group brochure's vision of Gulmohur Greens

TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see www.indianbuzz.com or www.gfiles.info

B K Chaturvedi
The former Cabinet Secretary is now Member of the Planning Commission with the rank of Minister of State.

Prashant Kumar Mishra
The 1972-batch IAS officer of UP has been appointed Chief Secretary of the state.

P V Bhide
The 1973-batch IAS officer has been appointed the new Revenue Secretary in the Government of India.

B M Singh
The 1970-batch IRS officer is the new Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

Gautam Buddha Mukherjee
The 1973-batch IAS officer of the Orissa cadre has been appointed Secretary, Tribal Affairs in the Government of India.

Vikram Singh
The 1974-batch IPS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre is now Director-General of Police of the state.

Anup Singh
The 1987-batch IFS officer has been posted as Joint Secretary in the Policy Planning Division of the MEA.

A K Chanda
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the WB cadre has been granted two years' extension as Chairman, Kolkata Port Trust.

D R Mehta
The 1961-batch IAS officer and former Securities and Exchange Board of India chief has been appointed Chairman of the Fourth Finance Commission in Bihar.

J P L Shrivastava
The 1970-batch IFS officer of the Haryana cadre has been appointed DG, Forests in the government.

B K Maurya
The 1990-batch IPS officer of the UP cadre has joined the Seema Shashtra Bal (SSB) as Deputy Inspector-General.

R C Joshi
The 1973-batch IAS officer of the Maharashtra cadre has become Member-Secretary, Space Commission, Bangalore.

R Gopalan
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the TN cadre is now Additional Secretary in the Union Ministry of Commerce.

N S Rana
The 1975-batch IPS officer of the AGMUT cadre has become Director-General of Police, Arunachal Pradesh.

Anil Kumar Ratudi
The 1987-batch IPS officer of the Uttarakhand cadre is the new IG, Intelligence of the state.

Deepak Das
The 1986-batch ICAS officer is now Chief Controller of Accounts, Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Textiles.

R S Gujral
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Haryana cadre has been appointed Director-General, Foreign Trade (DGFT).

A M Kasiviswanathan
The 1989-batch IAS officer has been appointed Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission.

Moving On: ias officers retiring in july

UTTAR PRADESH
Harish Chandra (1974)
Brahmadin Singh (1988)
Sabha Raj Singh (1989)
Girish Chandra Pandey (1989)
Ram Kumar (1990)
Vijay K Varshney (1990)

CHHATTISGARH
Dr P Raghavan (1971)

KARNATAKA
Azeezulla Baig (1990)

MAHARASHTRA
Dr A K Dua (1971)
N Rama Rao (1972)

MADHYA PRADESH
Bhagirath Prasad (1975)
Ramanand Shukla (1990)

ORISSA
Krushna Chandra Badu (1988)

MANIPUR & TRIPURA
B Reang (1992)

PUNJAB
Sukhpal Singh Gill (1988)

RAJASTHAN
Ashutosh Gupta (1989)

GUJARAT
E I Kalasava (1994)
K K Balat (1995)

UNION TERRITORY
Dev Singh Negi (1975)
S N Srivastava (1991)
Hmingthanzula Zula (1994)

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Yet another milestone: the Indian stock market became the third emerging one after the Chinese and Russian markets to surpass $1 trillion (Rs 40 trillion) in value. However, whenever markets trade near previous peaks, there is a general anxiety among investors as to how long the bull run will last. I have always argued that the long-term bull market theory for the Indian markets remains intact with the kind of growth rate reported, likely growth in corporate earnings, comparative valuations and so on. But investors are keen to know what they should do in the near term. Factors that guide the market in the near future – besides liquidity flow and sentiments – are interest rates, exchange rates, figures on inflation, global markets, crude prices and now the Q1 results also.

There was concern that liquidity could create problems for the market especially in view of the measures taken by the RBI to suck liquidity and also the mega issues of DLF, ICICI and others which together are likely to mop up over Rs 20,000 crore in the IPO market, raising concerns for the secondary market. However, with the DLF and ICICI issues being through, these concerns have receded. The FIIs appear to have been pouring in money continuously.

Further rise in interest rates is unlikely since the RBI's experiment of controlling liquidity by other means than resorting to CRR or interest rate hike has yielded effective results. It successfully sucked considerable liquidity through bond auctions which may not adversely affect the market sentiment. The RBI raised Rs 40,000 crore through government bonds and treasury bills in June.

Wholesale price-based inflation dipped to a 10-month low of 4.80 per cent, less than even the market expectation of 4.85 per cent. This is also way below the RBI's own projection of 5 per cent for the financial year 2007-08. In the currency market, the spectacular rise of local currency since January has been arrested to an extent. For how long is unsure. But one thing is sure – the rupee may now not be heading in a single direction.

As far as global markets are concerned, the European Central Bank raised the rate of interest by a quarter per cent to 4 per cent whereas the Bank of England hiked the rates last month to 5.5 per cent. Bank of Japan kept rates unchanged. The US data on core inflation has somewhat reduced the Federal Reserve. The yield on 10-year treasury bills dropped to 5.15 per cent from the peak of 5.33 per cent in the second week of June – when it touched its highest in five years. The yield on 10-year Japanese bonds also reduced marginally. Global markets have become increasingly sensitive to bond yields and this was reflected in the handsome gains recorded by almost all the world markets. India's economy may be isolated from global developments to some extent, but that is not the case with its stock market. Most of the major corrections in the recent past have been triggered by global factors, be it concerns of a slowdown in the US economy, jitters in the Chinese stock market and so on.

All this, with some other positives such as GDP growth of 9.4 per cent in the fiscal year 2006-07 and growth in industrial production of 13.6 per cent in April (far more than the 11.4 per cent forecast) has to an extent killed fears in the market. By the time you read this, the June quarter results will start pouring in. Judging by primary indicators such as advance tax collections, most companies are reporting a significant increase in payment over the corresponding period last year (notably SBI, RIL, ICICI–the leading index stocks). This reaffirms that the performance of Indian firms in the first quarter looks promising–contrary to what most analysts believed in view of the likely impact of monetary tightening on corporate bottom-lines.

However, auto, textile, real estate and some of the IT companies may register a decline in figures – but that should have only marginal impact. Growth now is driven more by capital expenditure than by consumption. Corporate balance sheets have large cash balances and not much debt and can go for their capex programmes without being much hurt by interest rates. Any slowdown may well be confined to export-sensitive sectors such as IT, auto and the like, which the market seems to have discounted already. But markets at peak always create some uneasiness among investors so some correction cannot be ruled out. However, stocks with potential to multiply two to three times in a year are not hard to find.

AIR DECCAN–CMP Rs 155

INDIA'S newest airline group, Kingfisher Air Deccan, is set to rationalize its fleet and is considering changes in the total fleet order. It has 71 aircraft, 70 destinations and 33 per cent market share. The two airlines will offer the cheapest as well as the most expensive fares. Although the airlines will retain independent identities, the group will save on operation cost, maintenance, ground and baggage handling, feeder services, engineering and security. Also, the recent consolidation in the industry will reduce over-capacity existing in the market, leading to stable pricing. Together with reduced costs, the margin will increase. The stock can therefore have a substantial upside in the long run.

RELIANCE COMMUNICATIONS–CMP Rs 514

THE company posted a strong set of numbers surpassing the market expectations. The net revenues rose by 6.5 per cent QoQ to Rs 3044.5 cr while net profit shot up by 31.6 per cent QoQ to Rs 771.1 cr. On the back of strong net subscriber addition of around 4 million and improved performance in global and enterprise segments, EBITDA margins have improved by almost 230 basis points QoQ to 40.7 per cent. Reliance Communications is capable of delivering a range of services spanning the entire infocomm (information and communication) value chain, including infrastructure and services — for enterprises as well as individuals, applications, and consulting. This stock will witness steady upward momentum from current levels.g

The author has limited exposure to the stocks recommended with a long-term perspective. gfiles does not accept responsibility for investment decisions by readers of this column. Investment-related queries may be sent to gfilesindia@gmail.com with Dr Sood's name in the subject line.

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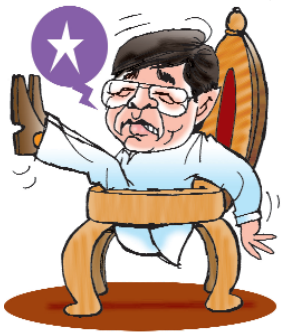
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

Apang's blunder, babu's wrath

WHEN *babus* decide to take on politicians, they mean business! Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Gegong Apang learned this the hard way. He had to quit the post for angering a 1979-batch Indian Forest Service officer of the AGMUT cadre.

After the elections on October 7, 2004, the Congress came to power in



ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

the state by winning 34 of the 60 Assembly seats. Apang became Chief Minister and all was smooth sailing for nearly two years. Then he made the mistake of recalling the Resident Commissioner of Delhi's Arunachal Bhawan, Avinash Mishra, to Itanagar. On return, the officer was relieved of the state posting and asked to report back to his cadre ministry in Delhi – the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Mishra approached Dorjee Khandu, the Minister for Power in the Apang Cabinet, and convinced him that he could topple Apang. Khandu, a former employee of the Indian Army Intelligence Core and a recipient of the gold medal for meritorious intelligence services during the Bangladesh war, launched "Operation Oust Apang".

Dissidence was engineered among Congress MLAs and 25 of them demanded Apang's ouster in March 2007. After a fortnight of political drama, the Congress high command crowned Khandu as the fifth Chief Minister of the state on April 9, 2007. Mishra, who had stayed on in Itanagar, then got his reward from the new CM and returned to Delhi as the Resident Commissioner of Arunachal Bhawan.

Narayanaswamy: tyrannical boss

THE style of functioning of Delhi Chief Secretary Ramesh Narayanaswamy is marked by two characteristics that have displeased the civil servants working with him no end. He has lately started to distrust them. Be it an issue of governance, soliciting advice or choosing an officer to accompany

him on tour, his choice is invariably a non-IAS officer. Rajbeer Singh, a section officer in the Secretariat, has earned the reputation of being Narayanaswamy's alter ego. This *jigri dosti* is brewing discontent among the civil servants who are being forced to play second fiddle to a section officer. On the other hand, the power brokers are happy as Rajbeer is more accessible.

To add salt to the wound, Narayanaswamy also speaks rudely to the officers. Even during formal meetings, he gives each bureaucrat a dressing down. Until recently, the hapless officers had no choice but to swallow the insult.

Last month Narayanaswamy called a meeting of all the bureaucrats and was surprisingly unlike his usual self. He remained courteous throughout the two-hour meeting. When it ended, everyone wondered what was behind the boss' new *avatar*. And then, one of the more practical officers exclaimed, "Eureka! Didn't you notice the unusual presence of a non-gazetted lady staffer – a favourite of his?" So now, whenever the Chief Secretary convenes meetings, the bureaucrats ensure that the lady also joins them.

MP-cadre officers rock in UPA govt

HALCYON days are here for Madhya Pradesh cadre bureaucrats in the UPA government! Three important Union Ministers from Madhya Pradesh, Arjun Singh, Suresh Pachauri and Kamal Nath, are politically poles apart yet always united when it comes to promoting the interests of any officer from their home state.

Among such officers, Sudip Banerjee, an old IAS favourite of Singh's, became Chancellor of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) after retirement from the HRD Ministry. He continues to work as an adviser to the ministry. Never mind that this has rendered the new Secretary, RP Agarwal, a 1972-batch IAS officer, ineffective.

BS Baswan of the MP cadre was made a senior

consultant to the Planning Commission after his retirement as Secretary from the HRD Ministry. However, sources say he is finding it tough to continue there under the shadow of one of the non-IAS members of the Commission so Singh is trying to send him to the Indian Institute of Public Administration. If this happens, Baswan will enjoy another five-year term.

Another IAS officer from MP, LK Joshi, who retired from Department of Personnel and Training under Pachauri's Ministry of Personnel, has found a berth in CAT. And Pachauri readily clears CAT files!

The ministerial trio will do the same for a non-MP officer only if he has earlier worked with any one of them. Champak Chatterjee of the West Bengal cadre falls in this category. Chatterjee is Secretary, Higher Education in Singh's ministry and has got an appointment as Member, CAT. g

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